

# snippets

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# An argument for the trivalent approach to presupposition projection

**Benjamin Spector** · Institut Jean Nicod, École normale supérieure,  
PSL Research University, EHESS, CNRS

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According to several theories of presupposition (Heim 1983; Schlenker 2008, 2009, a.o.), presupposition triggers in the scope of universal quantifiers (as in (1)) yield a *universal presupposition* (cf. (1a), while in static trivalent approaches (Peters 1979; Beaver and Krahmer 2001; George 2008, 2014; Fox 2008), the presupposition is strictly weaker. In such approaches, (1) presupposes the disjunction of its truth-conditions and its falsity-conditions, and a universal statement is false as soon as there exists a counterexample satisfying the presuppositional part of the predicate but not its assertive part (cf. (1b)).

- (1) Every linguist stopped smoking.
  - a. Presupposition under the Universal Projection (UP) view: ‘Every linguist used to smoke’.
  - b. Presupposition under the trivalent view: ‘Every linguist used to smoke and stopped, or at least one linguist used to smoke and didn’t stop’.

I claim that the interpretation of the sentence in (2) provides an argument for the trivalent approach.

- (2) Every linguist agrees with every other linguist that Uli made major contributions to the field.

First, note that *x agrees with y that p* presupposes that *y believes p* (Lahiri 2002). I assume the following LF for (2) (*p* abbreviates the that-clause):

- (3) [Every linguist][ $\lambda x$ [every linguist diff from *x*][ $\lambda y$ [*x* agrees with *y* that *p*]]]

On the UP view, (2) is predicted to presuppose (4a), which reduces to (4b) (assuming there exist several linguists):

- (4)
  - a. For every linguist *l* and every linguist *l'* distinct from *l*, *l'* believes *p*.
  - b. Every linguist believes *p*.

Since (2) also *asserts* that every linguist believes *p*, (2) is predicted to assert what it presupposes. It should thus pattern with (5), which asserts what it presupposes and is perceived to be tautological (technically, it is *Strawson*-tautological, being *Strawson*-entailed by the tautology – cf. von Stechow 1999):

- (5) Mary is her sister’s sister.

(2), however, is not perceived as tautological.

As a reviewer notes, the meaning of *agree with* might be more complex. For instance, the sentences in (6) suggest that Mary was aware of Paul's opinion and discussed it with him before agreement was/wasn't reached. This inference, however, behaves like a presupposition, being preserved, e.g., under negation. Even if we assume a stronger presupposition for *agree with* to take this into account, the assertive content would still be redundant.

- (6) Mary agreed/didn't agree with Paul that Jane should be invited.

The trivalent view fares better. On this view, (2) is true if every linguist believes  $p$ , and false if there exists a pair of linguists  $(l, l')$  that falsifies the universal claim that for every linguist  $l$  and every linguist  $l'$  distinct from  $l$ ,  $l$  agrees with  $l'$  that  $p$ . That is, it is false if there is a pair of linguists  $(l, l')$  such that  $l'$  believes  $p$  and  $l$  doesn't. The predicted presupposition – the disjunction of the truth and falsity conditions – is as in (7a), which reduces to (7b) (assuming there exists at least one linguist):

- (7) a. Every linguist believes  $p$ , or there is a linguist who believes  $p$  and another linguist who does not.  
b. There is a linguist who believes  $p$ .

This seems better. The presupposition no longer entails the assertion. Furthermore, the predicted presupposition seems plausible. In (8), for instance, an existential inference seems warranted.

- (8) Does every linguist agree with every other linguist that Uli made major contributions to the field?

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Benjamin Spector  
[benjamin.spector@ens.fr](mailto:benjamin.spector@ens.fr)  
Ecole Normale Supérieure  
Institut Jean Nicod  
24, rue Lhomond  
75005 Paris  
France